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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Japanese-Americans have had an historical background of difficulty within California. Early discriminatory legislation against Japanese-Americans had forced them into their own community and thus had forced them to retain their culture. World War II relocation of the Japanese-Americans had caused upheaval in family and community living. These adverse factors have been fairly well overcome.

There have been four generations of Japanese-Americans that have lived in Los Angeles. The Issei, Nisei, and Sansei are three of these generations. Their varying experiences, attitudes, problems, and activities were outlined. The Yonsei, a fourth generation, has been able to meet new situations. As people and citizens, this subgroup of Japanese-Americans is an integral, though distinctive, part of the Los Angeles community.

There has been a noticeable degree of concentration of Japanese-Americans in two areas of Los Angeles. This concentration has been dispersed on a block by block configuration rather than throughout a general area.

The traditional activities of Japanese-Americans have been accepted by a majority of the community which has shown interest in judo, karate, flower arrangements, music, and tea ceremonies. Japanese-Americans have had their own newspapers, radio, theatre, sports events, and community organizations. The Japanese have had a traditional respect for education.

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THE JAPANESE AMERICAN IN THE LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY

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THE CENTER FOR CULTURAL STUDIES
Adams State College of Colorado
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THE JAPANESE AMERICAN IN THE LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY

In order to understand more fully the contemporary Japanese American, we should consider his historical background and his cultural environment.

The historical background covers over one hundred years of contact with the American culture. This era may be divided into five periods:

A. THE AWAKENING OPENS IMMIGRATION

The history of the Japanese American begins with Commodore Matthew Perry and Townsend Harris.

Commodore Perry was commissioned by the United States Government to negotiate trade agreements with Japan. "The opening of Japan to international intercourse became inevitable in the middle of the Nineteenth Century." [1] The result of the negotiations was the American-Japanese Treaty of 1854. Trade relations were established and Japan emerged from isolationism.

In 1856, Townsend Harris, a merchant from New York City, was sent to Japan to clarify various ambiguous articles of the Treaty. Mr. Harris was the response to American diplomatic feeling that it was advantageous for the United States to increase trade relations with Japan. Through Perry and Harris, the road was paved for immigration of Japanese to the United States.

B. MOUNTING PREJUDICE BRINGS ABOUT DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION

Immigration to the United States began shortly after the 1854 Treaty. The first wave of immigrants to the Pacific Coast came as a response to the demand for cheap labor. The influx of immigrants, however,

was nominal. "Prior to 1900, Japanese arrivals were less than one per cent of the total annual volume of immigrants to America's shore." [2]

With the increase in immigration came community disturbances. "The first anti-Japanese explosion occurred in 1906." [3] The sudden rise in the Japanese population after the turn of the century prompted the citizens of San Francisco to extend Chinese exclusion to the Japanese. Exclusion bills were introduced in Congress yearly, but national legislation was not enacted until the 1920's.

Though the West Coast members of Congress could not muster support for national legislation, radicals were effective in their home states. The California legislature took drastic measures. The California Alien Land Law prohibited Japanese nationals from buying real property and leases for agricultural land were limited to three years (1913). By 1923, California enacted legislation prohibiting Japanese born immigrants from engaging in agriculture.

By 1924, the prejudice against the Japanese immigrants reached its zenith with the enactment of the Japanese Exclusion Law. For over twenty years, national administrations had averted discriminatory legislation because of the executive position that the Japanese immigration problem could best be solved by agreement with Japan rather than by statutory exclusion. President Coolidge and Secretary Hughes took the traditional administrative stand against statutory exclusion in 1924. Despite their efforts, however, the Japanese discriminatory exclusion bill passed and became law.

C. REJECTION BY THE AMERICAN MAJORITY RESULTS IN WITHDRAWAL OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Japanese immigration to the Pacific Coast thus came to a compulsory end and neither understanding nor assistance was rendered by members of the majority American community to their Japanese-American brother. As Japan had withdrawn into Asia centuries ago, so the Japanese American community withdrew. There was distrust that the Japanese-American would ruin the economy by acceptance of lower

wages. The Japanese American was not permitted to share in the benefits of the community, but he shared its burdens.

The isolation of the Japanese American by the majority American community resulted in the continued growth of social prejudices and bias against the Japanese American community. The exclusionary laws closed external growth, but the immigrant community continued internal development. Cracks appeared in the wall built around the Japanese American -- through education and religion -- bringing about some exchange between the Japanese American and the majority group.

D. WAR INFLAMED PREJUDICES CAUSE RELOCATION OF THE WEST COAST JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese American community once again came under deep suspicion. Prior prejudices were intensified and new ones invented. The Federal government, quiet since the exclusionary law of 1924, issued Executive Order No. 9066: all persons of Japanese lineage, aliens and citizens alike, were to be immediately evacuated from the "strategic" areas of California, Oregon and Washington. The relocation movements were forced evacuations under armed military guards with severe sanctions attached to any resistance or refusal.[4]

During the period of the relocation centers, the Japanese American lived under strange and foreign conditions; his basic way of life was altered; he was conditioned to respond to group imposed rulings. Evacuation and relocation will not soon be forgotten by the Nisei who struggled under conditions of hardships; the action remains incomprehensible to their children.

While many of their relatives and friends lived in forced exile, able male Americans of Japanese ancestry went to war in defense of this country. Special corps of Japanese Americans acted as interpreters and as trained personnel in intelligence and interrogation. The most noteworthy of the ethnic group fighting forces was the Japanese American 442d Regimental Combat Team.

E. JUDICIAL AND LEGISLATIVE CORRECTIONS OFFER SOME HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

The closing of the relocation centers at the end of the war did not end the hardships the Japanese American seemed destined to face. So-called citizen groups were formed to prevent the return of American citizens of Japanese descent to areas of California, some cases of violence occurred.

The end of the war, however, heralded legal and legislative attempts at improvement of relations with the Japanese American Community. For example, fishing rights and land titles of Japanese Americans were given judicial hearing. The Walter McCarren Act allowed a small quota of Japanese to enter the United States under existing immigration provisions. The Evacuation Claims Bill provided monies in partial payment for losses of goods resulting from relocation.

The improvement in social attitude of the majority toward the Japanese American, to permit equal opportunity in all aspects of community life, is an ongoing process requiring understanding of the history and culture of the Japanese American. We have looked at the briefest of summaries of the history of the Japanese American - now, let us look at some of his cultural aspects.

An appreciation of the Japanese American culture by the Los Angeles area resident is necessary because metropolitan Los Angeles contains the largest concentration of Japanese Americans in the continental United States.

Bureau of Census statistics[5] on the distribution of Japanese Americans in the United States indicate the following:

	1950	1960
United States	-	464,342
Hawaii	-	203,455
California	-	151,317
Ten Southern California Counties	-	92,057
Los Angeles (County)	36,761	77,314
Los Angeles (City)	25,502	51,468

Eighty per cent of the total Japanese American population resides in urban areas; of 99,382 households, 82,782 are in the environment of a city. The income of such households in 1959 was as follows:[6]

Under $1,000	3,112
$ 1,000 to 2,999	8,006
3,000 to 4,999	17,400
5,000 to 6,999	22,975
7,000 to 9,999	25,707
10,000 to 14,999	15,941
15,000 and over	6,231

A most interesting facet of the Japanese American community is that within the community sub-groups are categorized according to generation.

These sub-groups are:

Issei The first generation Japanese to immigrate into the Americas. (This term usually refers to those who entered in the early 1900's).

Nisei The second generation or actually the first generation to be born in this country.

Sansei The third generation of Japanese Americans who are presently primarily in the teen years.

Yonsei The generation following the Sansei.

Broken down into age groups, the Census revealed:[7]

Under the age of 10				108,035
From	10	to	20	71,360
From	20	to	30	70,659
From	30	to	40	97,507
From	40	to	50	55,029
From	50	to	60	28,624
From	60	to	70	21,420
From	70	to	75	10,071
Over 75				10,465

War Brides — As an outgrowth of World War II, many mixed interracial marriages occurred resulting in various combinations of a Japanese wife and an American GI.

Immigrants — This group consists predominantly of those arriving Japanese citizens who are usually here for a certain period of time either as employees of Foreign branches of Japanese companies or as students.

NOTE: This term may also apply to a limited number of individuals who are able to gain admission to the United States under the current immigration laws. The Term Issei can also apply to this group as they are the first generation in America.

Others — Includes combinations of intergenerational marriages; those born in the United States but raised in Japan (Kibei), etc.

The Issei were the early immigrants, primarily a pioneering group, who came to this country from Japan in the first decade of the 1900's. Many came to the United States for economic opportunity while others came to further educate themselves. The Japanese language and traditions of a closely knit family life bound them together; hence, they tended to remain a distinct community.

Most Nisei, or second generation, were raised with Japanese traditions at home and with American attitudes and expressions at school. Their parents instilled in them a reverence for education and they were often trained far beyond the requirements of jobs available to them. World War II, their internment and their relocation, took many to scattered communities throughout the United States, at a time when the country faced a shortage of skills. The outstanding war record of the 442d Regimental Combat unit and other Japanese Americans in the American Army gave the Nisei a new acceptability. Legislative changes made land ownership and citizenship possible. An American acculturation process continued. Christianity was adopted by many Nisei. American folkways were intermingled with and sometimes replaced the Japanese ways and attitudes of their parents.

The Sansei, or third generation Japanese American, are now in their teens and early twenties. They speak English as the language of their parents, though some study Japanese. Their schooling and recreation have been Americanized. Most of them have had fewer of the traditional Japanese influences than their parents, less emphasis upon formal education, less stress upon the family as a primary social force, and less differentiation as a separate group in the community. Nonetheless, they live in areas of Japanese American concentration, and they are probably aware of the racial distinctions made by the Caucasian populace.

Another group of Japanese Americans of distinctive characteristics, of course, are the Japanese brides brought back by American soldiers and their offspring. How they function in the overall community has not yet been widely observed.

A brief glance at other aspects of the Japanese American culture is informative:

1. Residence: From observations of some areas of the Los Angeles area, a degree of concentration of Japanese Americans is noticeable, i.e., the Crenshaw area and Gardena. The pattern of concentration, however, throughout metropolitan Los Angeles is dispersed on a block by block configuration rather than a general area.

2. Formal Traditional Activities: Today, as in the past, there is some semblance of ancient Japan in the American community. A few schools continue to teach "Nihongo" (the Japanese language); other establishments perform the techniques of dance; some dojos (gym) teach the philosophical as well as the physical aspects of the martial arts of Japan, i.e., judo, kendo, karate; the aesthetic qualities of Japanese flower arrangements is popular as well with the non-Japanese American; tea ceremonies and music, both sung and by instrument, are often performed. The acceptance and interest in these traditional activities by the majority community indicates great hope in a fuller interchange of cultural values between the Japanese American and his majority brother.

3. Religion: Christian religions have etched their way into the lives of many Japanese Americans, but there remain churches of traditional origin, such as Buddhist and Shinto. Most Christian Japanese Americans attend a church with a predominant Japanese American congregation.

4. Communication: There are the following formal organs:

a) Newspapers - within the Japanese American community there are five: three dailies with bilingual sections and two weeklies entirely in English. The newspapers are perhaps the greatest means of carrying and spreading items of interest throughout the Japanese American community in the Los Angeles area.

b) Radio - there are two Japanese speaking radio stations, an AM and an FM, on a special broadcast basis.

c) Theatre - infrequent visits by dramatic productions from Japan, but several motion picture houses feature imported Japanese films.

5. Lil's Tokio and Nisei Week Festival: Li'l Tokio is a merchant center, with some traditional Japanese aspects of culture, shops and restaurants. The redevelopment in the area of Li'l Tokio may make available more tangible prospects for tourist attractions, thus at least acquainting the majority community with the existence of the Japanese American heritage. Li'l Tokio is located at First and San Pedro Streets in the shadow of City Hall. (as a footnote, it is worth mentioning that another Japanese American shopping center is Crenshaw Square in the Crenshaw area).

During the summer, an annual affair is the August Nisei Week Festival in Li'l Tokio. The festival is a gala week of events, modern and traditional. Highlights of this occasion are parades, carnivals and various exhibits and performances.

6. Community Organizations: Various organizations exist comprised of Japanese Americans. These groups have different purposes and reasons for functioning. Of the service variety, there is the Issei Japanese Chamber of Commerce. For the Nisei, there is the Japanese American Citizens League, Optimist, and so forth. Two other service groups are a youth group, the Christian Youth Council, and a social welfare agency, the Japanese American Community Services. Veterans are organized into the American Legion 442d, Disabled Veterans, etc. An integral part of the community is organized sporting events: baseball leagues, fishing clubs, golf associations, bowling leagues, typical of any American community.

7. Education: The Japanese have a traditional respect for education, which is reflected in a strong appreciation and desire for higher education by Japanese American youth. Japanese American students are enrolled in most colleges and universities where they explore an increasing number of new fields, some previously closed to them, some not yet open. There is, however, a noticeable concentration of Japanese American students in specific schools. The traditional respect for education is sometimes lost as the generations assimilate into the American way of life. When the bonds which previously tied the Japanese American loosen, social problems, i.e., school dropouts and juvenile warfare, have tended to increase until new social values are established.

8. Occupation: Japanese Americans enter practically all professional and trade occupations. Still common sterotypes of the Japanese American as gardner, engineer or polite secretary persist.

9. Miscellaneous: Some cultural traits such as eating habits involving the use of rice for daily nourishment and chopsticks as utensils, depend predominantly on the degree of "Japaneseness" exercised by parents in the home.

The Japanese Americans in the Los Angeles Community have a unique cultural background. Three generations have lived here with varying experiences, attitudes, problems and activities; and a fourth generation has just come upon the scene to meet net situations. The process of acculturation has been too complex for easy generalization, and individual characteristics often make patterns of their own. As people and citizens, the Issei, Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei are an integral, though distinctive, part of the total pluralistic community.

FOOTNOTES

1. Roy H. Akagi, Japan's Foreign Relations, (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1936)

2. Francis J. Brown and Joseph S. Roucek, One America, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1945)

3. Akagi, op. cit.

4. cf: United States Government, WRA, A Story of Human Conservation, U.S. Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

5. United States Census of Population 1960, Nonwhite Population by Race, Bureau of the Census.

6. Pacific Citizen, National Japanese American Citizens League publication - October 18, 1963.

7. Ibid.

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